

Review

HOW SOUTH ASIA VIEWS THE UKRAINE CRISIS

Shriya Mokta

Assistant Professor Maharashtra National Law University, Mumbai

Accepted 11 May 2022

The paper aims to study the ongoing Ukraine-Russia crisis and how it will have an impact on changing world order. Design methodology used is qualitative analysis and the chapter mainly discusses about the ongoing conflict analyzed from a realist lens perspective. The article examines what stance different countries in South Asia have taken in this regard and have tried to view their standing from a realist lens. The conclusion is scrutinized by taking consideration of realist thinkers and interpreting it to international relations and the contemporary conflict and henceforth a future prospect for the conflict is decomposed in the article.

KEYWORDS: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, realism, democracy, invasion, balancing

Cite This Article As: Mokta, S. (2022). HOW SOUTH ASIA VIEWS THE UKRAINE CRISIS. Inter. J. Eng. Lit. Cult. 10(1):4-7

INTRODUCTION

India's neighbors in South Asia have taken their own positions on the war in Ukraine keeping in mind their history, economy, big power rivalry playing out in their countries and their relations with these powers. There was a clear divide among the seven countries between those who maintained a neutral position, and those who were unequivocal in their opposition to Russia. The objective of the paper is:

1. To analyze the stance taken by South Asian countries in the present crisis
2. To compute why the stance is taken and what is the realist backing
3. To view the crisis from realist lens perspective

Section 1 views the history of the present Ukraine-Russia crisis and mainly seen from perspective that crisis is tussle between West and Russia. Section 2 focuses on different stance taken by South Asian countries and analyzing it from realist perspective and section 3 analyzes the conclusion drawn from realist lens.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The article studies is mainly from 2017 onwards and its focus is to find what is the present Ukraine crisis and what is stand of different South Asian stand in the present situation. To understand the stand first we mainly have to understand the background of the current crisis.

Ukraine crisis is tussle between West and Russia:

The Ukraine President's policies since his election in 2010 have troubled a substantial section of especially those in the western regions, who support accession to the EU while eastern Ukrainians, however, prefer closer links with Russia. NATO and Ukraine have held joint exercises and the EU association agreement proposes deeper Ukraine-NATO links, though only 30 per cent of Ukrainians favor NATO membership such proposals fuel support aggressively. Moscow sees NATO as trying to encircle Russia, the Atlantic alliance has repeatedly tried to invent new roles for itself since the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Organization collapsed in 1991, therefore neither Ukrainians nor the EU must allow themselves to be traduced thus, Ukraine's future direction must be decided solely by Ukrainians. Russia have declared two regions Donetsk and Luhansk regions collectively called as Donbas region (shown in Fig. 1)as independent and the invasion in Ukraine is called by Russia "special military operation " invoked under article 7 of UNO whereas US has termed it as "invasion". Russia vehemently opposes Ukraine inclusion in NATO seeing it as a treat to Russian borders. Five NATO countries currently border Russia former Soviet states Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania became the members ¹(NATO, 2022) however strong objection for inclusion of Ukraine into NATO was raised by Russia.



Figure 1.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60506298>

If we look at different stand taken by countries in South Asia some of Indian neighbors voted against Russia at the UNGA while some abstained, looking at current geopolitics Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal supported the resolution against Russia in UNGA while Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China abstained from voting. If we review the stand taken by different countries:²(Subramanian, 2022)

Pakistan Embrace of Russia:

Pakistan decision to abstain at UNGA vote was a reflection of the new geopolitical possibilities it sees with Russia especially after US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistan hopes to build new axis with China and Russia that will take charge of Afghanistan and Eurasia.

¹ "Will Ukraine join NATO? ", Inews.uk, accessed on 13 March, 2022

² Subramanian N. "How South Asia views the war", The Hindu, accessed on 14 March, 2022

Nepal: pitch against Russia

Sandwiched between China and India both of which abstained from voting on UNGA resolution, Nepal has just emerged from huge domestic political standoff over \$ 500 million US development grant, its stand against Russia seemed to reflect its geopolitical difficulties.

Maldives

Foreign minister Abdulla Shahid being the president of UNGA and recently Maldives signed a defense agreement with US

Sri Lanka: Tea

Russia is major buyer of Sri Lankan tea and it can continue selling only if it can find a way around the sanctions. It has maintained a neutral stand but some in Colombo has questioned its neutrality drawing comparison with 1971 India-Pakistan war when Sri Lanka sided with Pakistan by giving its air force refueling facilities.

Bangladesh: 1971, 2021 memories

Bangladesh abstention can be seen in the tensions between the US and Bangladesh for the decision Biden administration took to sanction the Rapid Action Battalion, an elite paramilitary deployed against jihadist groups for its alleged human rights violation. While the country remembers Moscow helps to India military during 1971 war while US sided with Pakistan. Russia is also constructing Dhaka's first nuclear power plant at Rooppur.

India:

India's abstained from voting maintaining a neutral stand with US and Russia. India imports 65% of Indian armed forces equipment from Russia (first submarine, S-400 Triumf Missile, nuclear ballistic missiles Chakra, INS Vikramaditya, Brahmos missile, MiG Jets) and continues to rely on Russia for spares parts³(Jacob, 2021). Any interruptions in the supply of Russian arms or spares could have a devastating impact on our defense posture vis-à-vis the China-Pakistan axis⁴(Prakash, 2022). Also both countries are part of organizations like SCO; BRICS while on other India's trade with Russia is only \$10 billion whereas the trade between China and Russia is \$100 billion. Both countries growing military partnership and their shared opposition to Indo-Pacific framework makes it necessary for India to balance its ties with US to counter China's influence in Indo-Pacific. Therefore India's abstained voting in UNSC shows the country's vital national interest has been served by its "balancing act".

RESULTS

The conclusion that can be drawn from the given analysis is every country has its response keeping its national security its primary focus. The quote of famous political scholar Machiavelli "Politics should be separated from ethics" congruously be applied in international relations as national security for every nation is its utmost priority. Russia attack on Ukraine might be morally wrong but was a political correct step as article 5 of NATO states if any country gets attacked by any country all thirty members will collectively attack that country. Ukraine if included in NATO will be direct threat to Russia and all nations stand on the given situation can be viewed from realist view i.e. pure national interest. The present crisis is not the first instance of such problem. During cold war, Finland faced the choice between disastrous hostility and negotiated neutrality (Mitra, 2022)⁵. 'Finlandisation' the process with which a country decides not to challenge a more powerful neighbor, while maintain its sovereignty can bring peace to countries sandwiched between powerful adversaries.

³ Jacob H. "Russia a legacy relationship with limitation", The Hindu accessed on December 9, 2021.

⁴ Prakash A. "On your guard", Indian Express accessed on March 21, 2022.

⁵ Mitra S. "Why everybody loves this war", Indian Express accessed on March 22, 2022

WAY FORWARD

Issue in present time can be viewed from two different perspectives in global politics. The first, propagated by USA “making the world safer for democracy” regardless of the cost – as seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Syria, Libya in order to bring them under name fold of democracy. Secondly, as J. Nehru said- let each country choose its own path and be obliged to respect the choices it makes. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia should be solved through negotiations should be a lesson in restrain, reflection of mature diplomacy for the West. India’s is committed to international law and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations. It stands for diplomatic resolution of disputes and opposed the war. At the time of abstention at UN ,India made it clear by asking for a cessation of conflict, de-escalation of tensions and quiet and constructive diplomacy and this is how the way forward should be.

REFERENCES

1. “Will Ukraine join NATO? ”, *Inews.uk*, accessed on 13 March, 2022
2. Subramanian N. “How South Asia views the war”, *The Hindu*, accessed on 14 March, 2022
3. Jacob H. “Russia a legacy relationship with limitation”, *The Hindu* accessed on December 9, 2021.
4. Prakash A. “On your guard”, *Indian Express* accessed on March 21, 2022.
5. Mitra S. “Why everybody loves this war”, *Indian Express* accessed on March 22, 2022